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CANDID
THOUGHTS
ON THE LATE
APPLICATION
OF SOME
PROTESTANT Dissenting Ministers
TO
PARLIAMENT,
FOR ABOLISHING THE
SUBSCRIPTION
REQUIRED OF THEM BY THE
TOLERATION ACT.

By an ORTHODOX DISSENTER.

L O N D O N:

Printed for W. GOLDSMITH, No. 20, Paternoster-Row. 1772.

[Price Six Pence.]

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C A N D I D
T H O U G H T S
ON THE LATE
A P P L I C A T I O N
OF SOME
PROTESTANT Dissenting Ministers
T O
P A R L I A M E N T.

WHAT Mr. Israel Mauduit says, page 4, that "many of the Dissenters now find their opinions altered in some of these articles, which had not then been so carefully examined, (namely in 1689,)" may be very true, if understood only of a certain set of gentlemen, who pass under that denomination. But were any to suppose that it is universally so, they would fall into the most egregious mistake, although that seems, indeed, to be intended in the case of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, as represented by the Committee of Relief, &c. The Articles to which that gentleman (Mr. Mauduit) refers, are not mentioned in his pamphlet, and therefore it may be difficult to say, who are and who are not altered in their opinions concerning them. But if he means cer-
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tain Articles, which in all ages have been offensive to human wisdom, and creature arrogance; such as the Doctrine of the Trinity; or Three Divine, co-equal, co-eternal persons in one undivided, and indivisible Jehovah; there are many Protestant Dissenting Ministers, who are of the same opinion now respecting that Article, with our venerable Reformers and our ancestors in the year 1689; and must continue in the same belief till it shall please God, to alter the Revelation he has given of himself, for one more rational, or to give them different views of that which he has already given. Therefore to subscribe to the First Article of the Church of England is no hardship on them, consequently it is not necessary for *them* to pray for relief in this particular.

II. If the Divinity of our blessed Redeemer, be another article referred to, it may be affirmed on good authority, that a very great and respectable part of the body of Dissenters, are so far from being dissatisfied with the ascriptions of divine honours to him, as a person in Deity, distinct from the Father, and Holy Ghost, that they really would part with their whole interest in the world, rather than give up this blessed doctrine, upon which, as a foundation, rest all their hope and expectation of future salvation and glory. Consequently they cannot at all be offended with those who honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. They will not, therefore, think it hard to subscribe, but will even testify, that "two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never

to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man." Consequently a dispensing with their subscribing this Article will never, by them, be deemed worth a single prayer.

III. Nor are they more concerned about the 5th Article, seeing they verily believe, "that the Holy Ghost is one in substance, majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God." So that respecting the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, and the proper Divinity of the Son and Holy Ghost, they really wish for no relief for themselves at the hands of our Legislators; but even rejoice that these Articles were adopted into the national system of Religion.

IV. Original and birth sin, as it is express in the title of the 9th Article, is another thing which they suppose must be very offensive to men who never felt the plague of their hearts; but which they have the fullest conviction of in their own personal experience. Without the least scruple, without a moment's hesitation, therefore, they will at any time declare, that "original sin consisteth in the corruption of the nature of every man, whereby he is very far gone from righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil. Therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation;" though they never take upon them to say, how the Majesty of all worlds does, or, does not dispose of those who die in a state of infancy; resting satisfied, "that the Judge of all the earth must do what is right."

right." Nor can they depart from this Article of original sin, till they entertain a more favourable opinion of their own nature in its present circumstances; or have degrading thoughts of the extent and majesty of the eternal law.

V. Nor is the doctrine of free Justification, by the Grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus, any manner of offence to them. Therefore they are so far from being aggrieved by the orthodoxy of the eleventh Article, that they even wish the doctrine inculcated had been expressed in terms more strong and explicit.

To gentlemen who can justify themselves by the works of their own hands before an infinitely Holy God, this article must doubtless be very offensive: but to the poor, the maimed, the halt and blind; to the lost and perishing, to the rebellious and self-condemned, it must be equally acceptable. They receive the doctrine of a real, not a figurative atonement, and deem it perfectly consistent with the Divine Perfections, for God, if he saw meet to punish the sin of the offender in the person of a substitute. They think that God might in the fulness of time, send forth his own son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that, those who believe, may receive the adoption of Sons, without any impeachment of his own moral character. Consequently they do not think it an unfaithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of sinners; but a saying worthy of all
acceptation,

acceptation, and containing the very marrow, and Glory of the whole Gospel.

They are not convinced upon the volatile fancy of enthusiasm, but from an experience founded upon Revelation. The Word of God expressly declares of the Divine Law, that, whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and offend only in one point is guilty of the whole; and denounceth a curse upon every one, who continueth not in all things, written in the Book of the Law to do them. These, and such as these, being the testimonies of the written Word, and finding in themselves a total incapacity to fulfil so much as one precept of the Law perfectly, in thought, word, and deed, they see it impossible for them to be saved by their own Righteousness, and therefore they gladly submit to the Righteousness of another. Nor are they likely to object to this Article of Free Justification, till they shall find themselves capable of obtaining Salvation by the Works of the Law; which has not as yet been the case with any of their fellow sinners.

VI. Even the 17th Article of the Church of England, so very obnoxious to the rational Dissenters, is no way offensive to the Orthodox. Though they make no pretensions to superior reason, they think it not unbecoming them as men, and as Christians, to believe, that faith is the gift of God; that, God being omniscient, perfectly knew from everlasting, to whom he would give, and from whom he would withhold that blessed gift. It cannot so much as enter into their hearts to conceive, that God would have
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been unjust, if he had not given unto every man an offer of Christ and Mercy after their fall in Adam, seeing as a moral Governor he might have proceeded with them upon the footing of the legal covenant, under which they were placed, and the tenor of which they had broken. Why, say they, might not that God, who sees the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, be thought to have a right to establish his own council, so that it shall stand, and to do whatsoever pleaseth him, both in Heaven and on the Earth? Why might he not, if he saw fit, choose his own people in Christ before the foundation of the world, and predestinate them thus chosen to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself? They cannot consider predestination, and election in Christ, as any other than “a doctrine full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons,” because only thereby their personal holiness and conformity to Jesus are secured. So that in this article they are of the same opinion with their ancestors in the year 1689, and must be contented, according to Mr. Mauduit, with the same toleration that they formerly enjoyed. Of course they cannot be thought to be very ardent in prayer for relief, seeing they are no way apprehensive of oppression. Moreover, having nothing to object to the doctrinal Articles of the Church of England, a very *great and respectable part* of the body of dissenting Ministers have actually subscribed them, and are legally in the full possession of their Christian privileges, worshipping God without molestation, or the least painful apprehension of losing them, especially under the
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the reign of a Prince descended from the illustrious House of Hanover.

S E C T. II.

FROM what has been said in the foregoing Section, it will appear, that the Ministers of whom I have spoken, are not to be numbered amongst those in page 2, of the case of Dissenting Ministers, &c. who, it is said, "cannot in conscience comply with the Subscription required by the Act of Toleration," consequently they do not think themselves liable to the penalties specified in the first page of that case. So that how far soever any of the Calvinistical Dissenting Ministers have already concurred, or may hereafter concur, in any Petition to Parliament, for the Abolition of Subscription, that concurrence ought not to be understood as arising from any dislike to the doctrinal part of National Confession, but to one or other of these things following :

I. They believe it possible, that good men may heartily approve of the matter of the Articles, and may, notwithstanding, have objections to their subscribing them, as a human test of Divine Faith. This, I doubt not, may be the case of several, perhaps a considerable number of the Dissenters; consequently they will wish the abolition of a practice for which they think there is no warrant from Revelation, and therefore join in a Prayer to Parliament with those who object even to the doctrines themselves.

II. They

II. They know that there are some, though it is hoped the number is far from being so considerable as has been asserted, who really do not believe the doctrine of the Articles, and therefore cannot in conscience subscribe them, as is represented in the case referred to. Mr. Mauduit says, page 16, that this is owing to "their having studied the Scriptures more carefully," which does not appear to me to be the case. It is notorious, both from observation, and their own writings*, that instead of having studied the Scriptures more carefully, a disuse of them has been the parent of this change of sentiments, even as it is observable that those who are most addicted to scriptural studies, are most attached to the doctrines complained of.

Its being beyond a doubt, however, that from one cause or other, many who dissent from the Church of England, actually do object to subscribing the Articles, and the Orthodox Dissenters being enemies to a spirit of intolerance, notwithstanding all that has been alledged to the contrary from a certain quarter; they earnestly wish the dissatisfied persons that liberty which they require, provided it can be obtained in such a manner as not to entail infamy on some, and hardship on others, who have an equal right with themselves to worship God after the dictates of their own consciences, without molestation. They do not think that the Gospel does ever warrant coercive measures being taken with any, no, not even those who are its greatest enemies, seeing the blessed Redeemer came not into the world to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

* Dr. Priestley on Church Discipline.

While they by no means choose to be classed with the rational Gentlemen as to points of doctrine, they wish them all the liberty they have desired, on conditions hereafter to be mentioned : Let them have their superior reason, and let us have a vital faith in divine revelation.

The orthodox Dissenters would not wish to injure even an Atheist, however much they may pity his folly, abhor his iniquity, and wish his conversion : much less can they be supposed to desire to persecute those, who are willing to subscribe the Bible as the rule of their faith.

3. The case of Tutors and Schoolmasters of the Dissenting persuasion, as it is justly stated by the Committee, is extremely hard and prejudicial to the growth of moral principles. Every Orthodox Dissenter will therefore wish to see the heavy penalties, now impending in law, removed from over the heads of such a useful and necessary body of men : necessary to the good of the nation, and necessary to the Church of Christ. They would be loth to put their children under the care of those, who would take no care of their morals, or would corrupt them in their religious principles.

For these reasons, some of the orthodox Dissenters have heartily joined, with the dissatisfied, in the late Petition ; and for these reasons, none of the Orthodox would wish to oppose it as such, though they disapprove of every indirect measure

measure used to obtain it; and every measure which may bring hardship on others, as is apparently the case in the present Bill.

It will be therefore unjust and injurious, to represent them, as some have done, as enemies to liberty, given to persecution, &c. seeing all they aim at is to take care that, whilst they vote for liberty to some, whose love to the Gospel of Jesus is very dubious, they endeavour to secure, at least to do nothing against the liberty of others, whose regard to gospel truth is indubitable. But more of this in a subsequent SECTION.

S E C T. III.

IT does not appear to me, that the mode of application ought to have been in all respects the same, which the Committee has pursued. If those, who found themselves aggrieved by the Subscription, required by the Toleration Act, on account of the Doctrines contained in the Articles, had in their own behalf made application to Parliament, and prayed for relief in their own proper persons, it had been well. This would have freed them from certain embarrassments, which has since clogged their cause, and perhaps prevented its miscarriage. By pursuing this method, they would have had, as I think, the best wishes and endeavours of all the orthodox Dissenters for their success.

But when the Orthodox see themselves misrepresented to Government, as they think they are, Case, page 2, where the Committee of Relief

lief is pleased to inform the Legislature, that it "is admitted, the far greater part of the Dissenting Ministers have not complied, and cannot in conscience comply with the Subscription required by the Act of Toleration. The Dissenting Ministers, in general, are, consequently, liable to the penalties above-mentioned." I say, when they see themselves thus misrepresented, it may naturally be expected they will take such measures, as appear to them best calculated to do justice to themselves. If it were true that the far greater part of the Dissenting Ministers have not complied, and cannot in conscience comply, it would reduce the Orthodox to a very scanty number indeed. Which seems to be designed by the clause following: "The Dissenting Ministers in general are consequently liable to the penalties above-mentioned." If the Dissenting Ministers in general are liable to those penalties, it must be supposed that they have not qualified themselves according to the Act of Toleration, and indeed that they cannot in conscience qualify themselves. That this is the case cannot be made appear, but that the contrary is true will be evident from this single consideration, "That London and its environs contain upwards of 50 Dissenting Ministers, though not all of the general body, who, profess at least, to be truly Calvinistic in their judgment." What then must their number be in the whole nation?

No people of what persuasion soever can love to see themselves represented as disrespected, in point of number, or character, when in reality they think otherwise of themselves; therefore it cannot be thought strange, that

the Orthodox Dissenters wish to appear to our Legislators what they really are; as not so inconsiderable as the Amanuensis of the Committee has represented them. Especially as they flatter themselves, that some of the most numerous congregations belonging to the Dissenting interest are of their persuasion. Moreover they think, that if heads were to be numbered, the Orthodox would tell at least equal to the Rationals, if Ministers and People may both be included.

How far a zeal for obtaining a desirable object may be thought to justify any particular want of circumspection in its votaries is one thing, and matter of fact is another. That the sanguine expectations of the Committee of Relief might lead them to suppose, that all their brethren were as eager as themselves to obtain the removal of Subscription, may not be denied: but how they could venture to assert to Legislature "That in the present application the body of Dissenters, both Ministers and People are happily united," cannot be easily conceived, seeing the said Mr. Mauduit tells us, that they had not time to consult their brethren in the country, and make it so general a cause as they wished it to be. I have not heard of one congregation, as such being formally consulted, and I know of many that have not been consulted at all. Moreover I have conversed with many, who are by no means of opinion that the present measures are at all necessary, *to them*. It would be adviseable, therefore, if the Committee should still keep the object in view, that they represent things just as they are, without

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giving them any gloss, which may be thought to favour their design; as that only can screen them from the censure of those who are determined to have justice done to their reputation; and who cannot wish to have it thought, they have at all deviated from the doctrines of free and sovereign grace; or are less strenuous in adhering to them than their ancestors were.

S E C T. IV.

EVER since the happy Revolution, the lenity of the British Government has indeed been conspicuous, and but few Dissenters have fallen under the penalty of the law. We will by no means suggest that "Subscription has been regularly required, and the penalties constantly, or even frequently inflicted upon the persons not subscribing—Nor would we so much as hint the shadow of oppression," but freely acknowledge in the words of the worthy author of a letter to Protestant Dissenting Ministers, "that the grievance has subsisted these four score years," and that during that time we (or our forefathers) have frequently confessed satisfaction in the lenity of Government, and the moderate temper of the Clergy of the establishment." Yet we must own that individuals amongst the Clergy, have at times, discovered much of a spirit of Intolerance, and showed us what they would do, if in their power; and that, within that period, many Dissenters have been exposed to great inconvenience for the sake of a good conscience. Yet still we would by no means suppose that they had the least countenance from their superiors; much

much less that there has been within that period any disposition in Government towards Religious oppression, or infringement of our Christian Rights and Privileges.

After all, it may still be supposed, that, whatever confidence the rational Dissenters may have in the lenity and wisdom of Government, as not having the will to persecute them, nor even to call upon them to conform to the Act of Toleration; they cannot be very easy in their present circumstances. A small degree of acquaintance with men, will convince us of their mutability, so that the mere good pleasure of temporal Governours, is a tenure too uncertain by which to hold, a privilege so great as liberty of conscience. This nation hath produced bigots of the most furious zeal; what has been, may be again, and therefore the parties concerned, who choose the time when the best understanding between the Establishment and Dissenters subsists, can never be deemed blameable, provided the measures pursued are in themselves unreprouvable.

Let then the rational Dissenters, who, altho' exposed to no immediate hardships at present, yet, considering themselves as within the possibility of them, enjoy the privilege of British subjects in having full liberty to petition the Legislature: seeing an apprehended evil impending posterity, must, in the nature of things, so far as it is apprehended, be a real evil to themselves. And it is but agreeable to the common rights of men, that this licence should be allowed them, without any disagreeable, opprobrious

brious names being illiberally bestowed on them; let them also, on their part, be cautious of treating the Calvinists as persecutors, and persons of an intolerant spirit, merely because they use means to appear what they really are, not chusing to be considered of the same sentiments with those who affect to call themselves rational Dissenters. Let matters be fairly, deliberately, and candidly discussed, without stopping the mouths of people, by crying "The Question, the Question," as if a point must at all events be carried, and as if the parties concerned were already assured of a majority; a circumstance which never can do honour to any cause whatever. Let it be always remembered, that the more important any article is, the more need it stands in of a candid, a full, and a fair discussion, which may be obtained, without so much as the appearance of unbecoming warmth. The FURNACE of Wrath ought never to glow in an assembly of Christian Ministers.

S E C T V.

FROM what has been said in the foregoing Sections, the disposition of the Orthodox towards the Rational Dissenters, and also towards the present application to Parliament, may be in some measure obvious. It is hoped they stand exculpated from the charge of intolerance, and persecutive designs; but it ought also to be observed, that they are dissatisfied with the Bill itself, notwithstanding it passed the House of Commons, and are heartily glad that it was rejected by the House of Lords. They hope they may be suffered to express their dissatisfaction, without

without being thought to reflect on the Honourable Commons of England.

In the said Bill it was intended to be enacted, that, " In order to prevent persons from fraudulently qualifying themselves as Dissenting Ministers, every person who shall offer to qualify himself as a Dissenting Minister, at the General Quarter Session of the Peace shall, if thereunto required, produce to the Justices of the Peace at the said Session assembled, a Testimonial, signed by three or more Protestant Dissenting Ministers, and specifying the respective places where they stately officiate, in the words, or to the effect following, *videlicet*.

We whose names are under written, being Protestant Dissenting Ministers, hereby testify, that we know A. B. and that to the best of our knowledge, he is a person of a good Moral and Christian character, and that we receive and acknowledge him as a Protestant Dissenting Minister.

Witness our hands this day of

This appears as a clause, not incapable of very dangerous consequences to some of his Majesty's subjects. A clause not devised by Parliament, but prayed for by those votaries for religious freedom, who compose the Committee of Relief. Liberty is truly desirable; but I trust I shall never wish it for myself at the expence of any of my fellow subjects. May that rule of moral equity given by Jesus, my Divine Redeemer, ever stand before my eyes, to influence me to do the same things to others, which I would wish done to myself in their circumstances.

That

That Government and inferior Magistrates bought not to be imposed upon, will be readily admitted; but then it may be thought, that when they are inclined to extend their indulgence farther towards Dissenters, they themselves can, and indeed ought to devise proper measures to prevent their being imposed on, without our taking upon us to put them in the way.

The passing of the present Bill would put a degree of power into the hands of Dissenting Ministers, with which no dispassionate man would wish them intrusted. Who would wish to have it in Mr. Radcliffe's or Dr. Priestley's power to say to a candidate for the Ministry, "You shall not qualify yourself." Those who would know these gentlemen's spirit, may only read Radcliffe's Sermon on the Denial of Relief, and PRIESTLEY'S ESSAY on Church Discipline.* The Orthodox Dissenters in a special
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* I would recommend it to the Reverend Gentlemen of the Orthodox persuasion, who, out of mere good nature, and benevolence to those who call themselves Rational Dissenters, have been so zealous for the Bill of Relief, to read Radcliffe's Sermon, page 17, with attention. And after they have surveyed the picture which he has drawn of their doctrines, let them say whether they have not too precipitately embarked in the late enterprize, and, undesignedly, been assisting their own most avowed enemies, as well as enemies to what we take to be the Truth of the Gospel. Few of those gentlemen discover a candid, mild, and modest spirit, like the sensible Dr. Kippis, a gentleman superior to most of them in every

manner have cause to wish, that the power of qualifying Protestant Dissenting Ministers may for ever remain where it is at present, and that it may never be suspended on a certificate to be signed by three or more gentlemen of the cloth, of the Dissenting persuasion.

Who will be deemed eligible to sign a certificate for a candidate besides those who are accounted regular, and approved by the general body? If others, who, although qualified according to the Act of Toleration, are not received by the general body, should take upon them to sign such a certificate, would not the Justices assembled at the quarter sessions have it in their power to refuse the candidate who should come with no better credentials? Is it to be thought that Government will rest satisfied, after the passing of such a law, without knowing who are and who are not the approved Ministers of the three denominations; and that inferior Courts in the several counties of England will not insist upon being furnished with regular

every valuable branch of learning, and every species of useful knowledge.

It is easy to see, that, that inflammatory preacher Mr. Radcliffe, intends the Calvinists, or Orthodox; and surely a man who would wish there were not a Calvinist in the world, would make little scruple of eradicating them; especially as he insinuates, after giving a most unfair and iniquitous gloss upon their doctrines, that they ought not to be tolerated. A strange reflection, indeed, upon the formula of the Church of England, which is confessedly Calvinism. From the power of such pretenders to superior reason as Mr. Radcliffe, may God and the British Government ever defend the Orthodox Dissenters.

regular lists of Dissenting Ministers within their own peculiar jurisdictions?

At all events it appears to me, the power of signing certificates to candidates will be confined to those who are of the general body; and of course, should that be the case, those who are not in that connection will be left without any legal protection. An event very undesirable to all who are not lost to every virtuous and tender feeling; especially as, in the metropolis only, there are not less than fourteen congregations, some of them even numerous, and all of them strictly Orthodox Dissenters, who have no connection at all with the general body; and some of whom really choose to avoid that connection, for reasons which they think substantial. At present those Ministers and people are legally protected by the Act of Toleration; but their case will be very much altered, if that mode of qualification should be disannulled.

If it be alledged, that Ministers rising in future, in those Congregations, who are not in Board-Connection, ought to confide in the generosity of the embodied Ministers, who, it may be thought, will never discountenance a young man, who they think deserves encouragement. It will be replied, that there is much more reason why the Rational Dissenters, who cannot subscribe to the Articles, should confide in the becoming lenity of the present government; as for many years back there has not appeared in government a spirit so malignant towards Dissenters, as they themselves have frequently discovered towards one another, and as some of
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the rational divines of our day manifest towards the Orthodox.

If it be said, — “ Those irregular people will always find enough of their own sort who will readily subscribe their certificate,” it will be replied, “ admitting that to be the case, of what real advantage will it be to them; seeing there is a possibility that such a testimonial may not be deemed authentic by a Bench of Worshipful Justices of the Peace.” I am credibly informed, that a Dissenting Minister of the Anabaptist persuasion, and one who is actually upon the general list, applied at Hicks’s Hall for qualifying himself, and was refused till he should bring a testimony from some of his friends, known to be of the regular body. The reason of which conduct, as given by the Magistrates themselves, is, their having been frequently imposed upon by Methodist Teachers, who came to qualify under the denomination of Protestant Dissenting Ministers; which imposition they are determined, as far as possible, to prevent.

That Churchmen ought not to qualify themselves as Teachers, under the denomination of Protestant Dissenters, will be readily allowed; and that so doing is nothing short of the vilest hypocrisy, I readily confess. But these Magistrates may know, that many of the Methodist Preachers actually are Protestant Dissenters from principle, notwithstanding unconnected with the general body, and having their objections to any particular union with it,

If it be proper to trust to the future candour of the general body in reference to the said certificate, may it not be asked, What reason we have to hope they will be more candid, after they have got power upon their side, than now when Regulars and Irregulars are on a level in the eye of the Law, which knows no distinctions, how many soever we ourselves may be pleased to make. It appears to me ungenerous and unjust to seek relief for myself at the expence of others, as is the case in the present application. I do not like that indifference towards, and disregard shewn to the Methodists in Mr. Mauduit's pamphlet; as it shows a defect both of a Christian temper of mind, and of the principles of sound policy.

It would be no wonder if bigotted Church men should wish to crush the Methodists, for whilst they exist in their present capacity, they cannot be considered as sound Church men; but it is impolitic in the highest degree, for the Dissenters, ever to become, in any sense, accessory to their oppression, seeing whilst they exist, as they now are, they must be a very great additional weight in the scale of the Dissenting interest, and which, perhaps, it may be feared, by some, may make it eventually preponderate. By so much therefore as the growth of the Methodists alarms the high fliers of the Church party, by so much ought it to excite the whole body of Dissenters to give them all lawful assistance, so long as the safety of the State and the order of their own congregations are no way concerned. For my own part, I scruple not to
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give it as my opinion, that whatever notions the rational Dissenters may have of themselves as a body, that were they to be deserted by those whom they now affect to despise, they would appear very insignificant in the eye of Government. And if they go on as they have begun, they certainly will be deserted by all who have any regard to the Gospel of Jesus. The orthodox Dissenters will never surely, continue in connection with those who threaten to pull down that Idol, the Divinity of Jesus Christ, as some of them are said to have threatened.

S E C T. VI.

TO me it most evidently appears, that it is not a spirit of intolerance, nor even of ill will, that has hindered some of the Calvinists from joining with the free thinking Dissenters in praying for relief: but an aversion to being considered in the same light with them in point of faith and doctrine—and an apprehension that the bill, if it had passed into a law, would have done more harm than good; whilst it exempted those who warmly militate against what we call Gospel, from any legal penalty, it would have involved others who preach it, in difficulty and danger.

Some Calvinists who have warmly espoused the Petition indeed tell us, that it has nothing at all to do with matters of faith, but is wholly political; which in one sense may be true, but in another it is certainly not so. The first motion said to be made by a ministerial Member
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of Parliament, was certainly very good policy; as by shewing a particular favour to the Dissenters now, though even unsubstantial, he might secure his own election, together with that of some others of the house, whose credit with the public is pretty near as low as his own, against the next Parliament. It must certainly be a great acquisition for a candidate to have the Dissenters on his side: but if this is the case, as I am informed it is, I from my soul hope and wish, that their disappointment may be as general as that which has befallen the rational Dissenters.

But that it is religious, and not political only, Mr. Mauduit and Mr. Radcliffe have sufficiently shewn; and that this application for relief arose from a rooted dislike to the doctrine of the Articles, is now beyond a doubt, since those publications came abroad. It is hoped, therefore, that as the rational Dissenters would not upon any account be thought the same in doctrine with the orthodox, that those among the orthodox who refuse to be ranked along with them may be forgiven. Surely we have as much reason on our part to abhor that religion, which so shockingly debaseth the blessed Immanuel, as they can have to abhor ours on account of its supposed absurdity.

As it is now apparently a religious affair, a coalition would be impossible. Oil and water may as soon incorporate as the orthodox and rational Dissenters agree in the matter of application in that view of it.

One way, however, and but one, as I think; remains to heal the animosities kindled, and to put the matter in the most likely way for success; which, if adopted, would, I am persuaded, reconcile every mind to it.

Let the present mode of qualification, as required by the Act of Toleration, remain in full force, for the benefit of those who choose to distinguish themselves by their regard to the doctrinal Articles of the Church of England; as also for the benefit of those who may find it difficult to obtain a certificate under the hands of three regular approved Ministers, so that they may be sheltered under the wings of the law.

This cannot be the least degree of hardship upon the Rational Dissenters, and may tend to prevent the disagreeable and unbecoming alterations which otherwise may arise. This being done, for the above causes, let there be a petition to Legislature, that a clause may be added to the Toleration Act, answerable to the tenour of the prayer made for relief. This will be doing justice to every party. This, had it been at first adopted, might have produced the best consequences, and most certainly would have at least engaged the good wishes of the whole body of Protestant Dissenters. This, if yet adopted, may be the means of preserving that political union, which alone can render the Dissenters respectable in the eye of Government.

I assure my reader it is not a fondness to appear in print, that has induced me to write upon

upon this subject, to which I consider myself very unequal, but a real concern for the peace of the Dissenting body. If therefore I should have missed my way, in seeking to procure it, and instead of quenching the animosities already glowing, this performance should prove the unhappy means of stirring up more, it will be as much my own affliction, as it possibly can excite the readers indignation. My main reason for writing at all was, if possible, to prevent any thing inflammatory appearing on this side of the question.

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